Sharing Innovative Approaches to Delivering 16-19 Study Programmes

Dudley College
“Enrichment activities within the Study Programmes ensure that our students develop their employability skills, as well as achieving qualifications.”

Deanna Lambert, Director, Dudley Bustech

About the college

Dudley College is a long-established general further education college situated in the Black Country Metropolitan Borough of Dudley. The College’s history can be traced to the Dudley Institute in 1862.

The mission and character of the College is reviewed regularly by the Corporation Board, taking fully into account the wider strategic priorities of national, regional and local government, and the needs of the local people and the employers of the region. The College’s mission statement for 2013-16 is:

*Our mission: Outstanding learning which develops skills, raises aspirations and changes lives.*

We offer 4,000+ courses in a wide range of vocational and academic programmes. The College provides courses in all the sector subject areas and is actively involved in employer engagement, working with almost 1,500 employers on an annual basis. Strong partnerships exist with universities and local schools and some collaborative work is undertaken with other colleges.

The College employs approximately 750 staff and is a major employer in the Black Country. Despite the continuing instability in the economy, and the uncertainties this brings, the College regularly produces underlying surpluses and generates cash which we reinvest for the benefit of our learners.

The College is the preferred choice for over 12,000 students, including young people, adults and employers. As a general further education college, we seek to meet the needs of:

- Local young people aged 16-19 years following full-time and part-time study and apprenticeships
- 14-16 year olds undertaking part-time vocational programmes, delivered in collaboration with local schools
- Employers locally, regionally and nationally seeking to develop the skills of their workforce via part-time study
- Individuals in employment seeking to develop their skills to improve their employability, by following full and part-time study and apprenticeships
• Individuals and community groups seeking to enter the world of education and training, on a part-time and full-time basis to improve their life and employability chances and those of their families and communities
• Adults seeking to gain higher level qualifications
• Learners from overseas aiming to gain British qualifications, studying full and part-time on a full cost basis.

The College was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2013. The report, published on 9 April 2013, found that all areas of the College were ‘Good’ or better, noting the College's many outstanding features. Inspectors particularly praised the College for its ‘very high’ success rates, ‘outstanding’ accommodation and resources across the new Learning Quarter1 and the ‘inclusive and harmonious environment’ in which students study. Students' attitude to the College, their tutors and each other was also commended. Their ‘behaviour is excellent’ and they were seen to ‘take their studies seriously’ and ‘enjoy coming to college’. The College's Visual Arts provision area was awarded the highest grade of ‘Outstanding’. Ofsted inspectors awarded the College an ‘Outstanding’ grade across all areas when a Social Care Inspection was carried out in November 2013.

Study Programmes

The College reviewed its 16-18 year old full-time provision in 2013 and adopted a whole college strategic approach to the design and implementation of Study Programmes. A bespoke curriculum modelling tool is used to ensure a consistent approach to Study Programme design, structure and content. The curriculum modelling tool was developed in-house and has evolved over a period of five years. It is now a sophisticated and reliable means of costing programmes, checking the validity of learning aims and integrating data. In its simplest sense, the tool links marketing information to our website, compares timetabling information with planned hours and calculates income.

Annualised planned learning hours of 540 to 600 hours are arranged over a 34 week period, and as a general rule 459 hours are allocated to the main qualification aim of Level 2 and Level 3 programmes. Level 1 programmes contain a substantial vocational qualification and offer progression to a higher level qualification in the subject area.

In most curriculum areas subject sector specialists are responsible for delivering the functional skills qualifications that act as a stepping stone for students who are working towards achievement of GCSE A*- C grades in Maths and English.

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1 http://www.dudleycol.ac.uk/dudleylearningquarter.aspx
Students receive additional support for English and this is available through our Learning Hubs. The support of the Raising Standards Team (RST) had a huge impact on learner success. Many curriculum teams engaged highly in support and showed good improvements in success rates.

The College has a Lead Practitioner team for Functional Skills, Key Skills and PSD. The team has supported delivery staff through peer observation, individual mentoring and comprehensive staff development tailored to meet the needs of individual curriculum teams. They also carried out comprehensive internal verification and standardisation, in order to ensure high quality across the College. Strong links with Warwick University enabled us to deliver L4 qualifications to teaching staff which contributed to the overall improvement in teaching and learning.

**The learner voice**

Each programme has an elected class representative who is trained for the role and has a full understanding of how the ‘learner voice’ can help make positive changes to the College, their local community and wider society. It is in response to student feedback that most foundation level programmes focus on attainment of one functional skill qualification aim at any given time. The practice has resulted in improved participation and student successes.

**Enrichment**

Designated timeslots are identified on the cross-college timetable grid to allow for whole college participation in sport academy and non-qualification activities. For example, the College is incorporating a number of innovative initiatives into its engineering programmes. Non-qualification activities in this area include internships, whereby employers provide students with a suitable project, a place to work and support when required over a four week period. Mentoring opportunities offered by partnership employers provide our students with a ‘real life’ insight into engineering as a career. Students also benefit from work projects, site visits and guest speakers associated with engineering and manufacturing.

Other curriculum areas within the College work closely with a charity organisation to complete a ‘real life’ externally commissioned work project. Photography and media students are issued with a brief which outlines the marketing and promotional activities that are needed for the forthcoming year. Students have the opportunity to explore different ways of working, whilst producing and presenting their finished piece. Members of the charity organisation select and acknowledge the most appropriate submission at the end of the annually organised project.
As part of their non-qualification activity IT students have worked with local community groups and associations to develop websites or refurbish computers. In one instance students had a remit to provide the organisation with online presence as quickly as possible, followed by a long-term plan of a complete design. A specialist content management system was subsequently installed, enabling the organisation to connect with key stakeholders and funding bodies.

The College works successfully with a wide range of local nurseries, schools, care homes and similar organisations to ensure Study Programme students have access to a range of different work place environments which satisfy awarding body requirements. In the area of care and childcare/early years work experience co-ordinators are responsible for arranging and monitoring placement providers. Assessors are in place to conduct visits and carry out observations.